



A Response to the Executive Order on Refugees and Immigration

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To: #ASC Community <asccommunity@agnesscott.edu>

Wed, Feb 1, 2017 at 12:55 PM

Dear Members of the Agnes Scott Community,

As you know, President Trump signed an Executive Order last Friday that barred immigrants and visitors from seven countries -- Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen -- from entering the United States for 90 days, halted all refugee resettlement for 120 days, and indefinitely banned Syrian refugees. The order also suggested the United States might create a religious test for refugees in the future. At least four federal judges have issued temporary injunctions against its enforcement with respect to certain individuals, but its longer-term legal status remains unclear.

We are a politically diverse college community and people will have different views on the tradeoffs between national security and immigration policy. I also want to acknowledge that the stated goal of this Executive Order is to make America safer and that many Americans who support it sincerely believe it will achieve this vital aim.

However, as framed, this Executive Order violates our core values as a college committed to global learning and as a diverse, inclusive and welcoming community. It harms the principle of respect for religious freedom which is foundational both to our constitutional democracy and to Agnes Scott's own founding tradition in the Presbyterian Church. It violates Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, drafted by a U.S. representative and signed by the government of the United States, which declares that "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." And it damages the ideal of an open society welcoming to immigrants and refugees – an ideal which has made America great.

Personally, as the daughter of refugees, I deplore the decision to turn our backs on Syrian refugees, who are victims of one of the worst humanitarian crises since World War II. And I fear that the ban will not only weaken America's moral standing in the world, but fan the flames of extremism at home and abroad and ultimately make us less safe.

Our Muslim students, faculty and staff are a valued and integral part of the Agnes Scott community. We are also enriched by members of our community who are refugees, as well as by our partnership with refugee-serving community organizations including the Global Village Project, the Fugees, International Rescue Committee and Every Campus a Refuge.

I want to assure you that we are reaching out to all members of our campus community from the above-named countries to offer support and guidance during this difficult time and advising them to avoid international travel for the immediate future. We are also in contact with immigration experts and national higher education associations to stay abreast of this rapidly evolving situation.

None of the members of the Class of 2020 who will embark on their SUMMIT Journeys next month, nor their faculty and staff leaders, are citizens of the seven named countries. Nor do we have any students currently studying abroad who would be directly affected by this travel ban. We are committed to the safety and well-being of all our travelers and will arrange for legal assistance in the event that any member of the Agnes Scott community traveling abroad on college business requires it. I know that many of you have concerns and questions and encourage you to contact the Center for Global Learning in 104B Buttrick Hall for support and guidance.

With leadership from many across campus, including SGA, the Center for Global Learning, SUMMIT faculty, and the Gay Johnson McDougall Center for Global Diversity and Inclusion, we have several information sessions planned so that all interested members of the campus community can learn more. Please check the Irvine for confirmed times, locations and further details.

[TENTATIVE] Tuesday, February 7, from 1 to 2 pm: information session on the Executive Order and its implications featuring experts on immigration law and civil liberties.

Tuesday, February 7, from 4 to 5 pm: Discussion facilitated by faculty and staff framing these events and debates in a global and historical context. This session is designed as a complement to the Journeys course but open to all.

The Center for Global Learning will organize additional pre-departure briefings for all Journeys participants. Finally, we will be bringing immigration attorneys to campus to provide free, confidential advice to students, faculty or staff who are concerned about the impact of

this Executive Order and other changes to immigration policy. Again, please watch for announcements about all these events and resources in the Irvine.

We are blessed at Agnes Scott to be a community that values freedom, diversity, compassion and justice. I am proud that so many of our community members are speaking up, whether as individuals personally affected by this ban or alarmed by its implications for themselves and their loved ones, or in solidarity with those targeted.

Let us continue to support one another with love and compassion and live up to and speak up for our values.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth

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